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**Congress of the United States**  
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May 6, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

As Congress continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, I write today to urge you to include a significant, additional sustained federal investment of at least \$5 billion in funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over the next five years dedicated to researching vaccines against various strains of coronavirus, including the strain that causes COVID-19.

Seventeen years ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared that a strain of coronavirus was the cause of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The virus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is also a type of coronavirus. The novel coronavirus causing COVID-19 is the third coronavirus-related outbreak in a span of two decades, and health experts warn of similar outbreaks in the foreseeable future. Despite the valiant efforts of scientists to accelerate research for a treatment, including “repurposing” drugs, the simple fact is that a vaccine is years away.

I recognize and appreciate the funding that Congress has already dedicated to research into treatments and vaccines against COVID-19. As a result of the COVID-19 relief packages passed by Congress in March, NIH has received a total of nearly \$1.8 billion in supplemental funding for coronavirus research. But the time and expense typically required to develop a new vaccine means we are will be playing catch-up for months at the very least, and likely for several years into the future, to create, approve, and distribute an effective vaccine against COVID-19. And as we attempt to make up for this lost time, an untold number of Americans will continue to die from this disease. Scrambling to kickstart vaccine research when a pandemic is already happening is far too late. We know this global health crisis will not be the last, and we must begin now to adequately prepare for the next one.

The federal government is long overdue investing in developing a vaccine to protect against coronaviruses. That’s why I urge you to include at least \$5 billion over the next five years for the National Institutes of Health, the largest medical research funder in the world, to develop a vaccine against COVID-19 and similar viruses as part of the next COVID-19 Congressional

relief package. New funding for COVID-19 disaster relief should include this investment as a down payment for a healthier and safer America and world. Had we begun making this investment two decades ago, we could have saved trillions of dollars, tens of thousands of lives, and spared the good people of this nation from having to endure so much death and destruction.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to respond to the COVID-19 public health crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Brian Higgins", with a horizontal line underneath.

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress